

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TAIPEI 06022 021023Z

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ERDA-05 NRC-05

ACDA-07 OES-06 OMB-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 6022

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS MNUC TW

SUBJECT: ROC NUCLEAR PROGRAM

1. FOX BUTTERFIELD, NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT, IS IN TAIPEI AND HAS REQUESTED APPOINTMENT WITH ME TO DISCUSS GROU NUCLEAR REPROCESSING ACTIVITY. I AGREED TO TALK WITH HIM ON BACKGROUND BASIS WITHOUT COMMITTING MYSELF AS TO HOW FAR I WOULD BE ABLE TO REPLY TO HIS QUESTIONS AND I THEN REQUESTED BUTTERFIELD TO SUBMIT IN ADVANCE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS HE WISHED TO ASK. APPOINTMENT HAS BEEN SET FOR 10:30 A.M, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3.

2. BUTTERFIELD HAS SUBMITTED FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

A. HAVE YOU ANY KNOWLEDGE OF REPORTS THAT THE ROC IS REPROCESSING SPENT URANIUM?

B. WHEN DID YOU FIRST BECOME AWARE THAT THE ROC WAS CONSTRUCTING A LAB FOR REPROCESSING?

C. HAVE YOU, AND WHEN DID YOU, CONVEY US CONCERN TO THE ROC REGARDING THE REPROCESSING OF URANIUM?

D. IS THERE ANY INDICATION IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE LAB

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PAGE 02 TAIPEI 06022 021023Z

THAT THE ROC IS DOING ANYTHING ELSE TO REPROCESS URANIUM?

3. I PROPOSE TO RESPOND TO BHE ABOVE QUESTIONS ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

A. WE ARE AWARE OF NUMEROUS REPORTS OF VARYING RELIABILITY AND PERTINENCE TO THIS ISSUE. I WOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO MAKE ANY GENERALIZED ASSESSMENT OF SUCH REPORTS.

B. AS I RECALL, I WAS BRIEFED IN GENERAL TERMS ON GROCNUCLEAR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES SHORTLY AFTER MY ARRIVAL IN TAIPEI MORE THAN TWO YEARS AGO. SUBSEQUENTLY, EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE KEPT ME GENERALLY INFORMED OF DISCUSSIONS WITH GROCN OFFICIALS AND THE PROGRESS BEING MADE TOWARD GETTING THE LABORATORY IN QUESTION INTO OPERATION; THEY HAVE MADE SEVERAL VISITS TO THE FACILITY. THE GROCN HAS SOUGHT THE USG'S APPROVAL TO DISSOLVE SOME FUEL PLATES IN THIS LABORATORY AND HAS ALSO ADVISED THE IAEA OF ITS INTENTION. THERE IS NO SECRET ABOUT THIS REPROCESSING LABORATORY WHICH IS DESIGNED FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES.

C. OUR CONCERN ABOUT NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND THE RELATED MATTER OF LARGER SCALE REPROCESSING OF FUEL HAS BEEN CONVEYED TO THE GROCN--AS IT HAS BEEN TO MANY OTHER GOVERNMENTS--ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION SINCE MY ARRIVAL HERE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, MY PREDECESSOR HAD ALSO EXPRESSED SUCH CONCERN--A REFLECTION OF THE CONTINUING ATTENTION THIS MATTER HAS RECEIVED IN THE USG. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE GROCN CLEARLY UNDERSTANDS OUR POSITION ON THIS ISSUE.

D. MY RESPONSE TO THIS QUESTION WILL BE ALONG SAME LINE AS RESPONSE TO QUESTION A.

4. I BELIEVE OUR INTERESTS WILL BE BETTER SERVED BY PROVIDING THE FOREGOING LIMITED, ON BACKGROUND, RESPONSES TO BUTTERFIELD'S QUESTIONS THAN BY REFUSING TO HAVE ANY EXCHANGE WITH HIM ON THIS SENSITIVE SUBJECT. I WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS ON MY PROPOSED RESPONSES PROMPTLY SO AS TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE FOR MY SCHEDULED MEETING WITH BUTTERFIELD FRIDAY MORNING. UNGER

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